THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The table given below indicates the trend of crude oil production in the North Eastern states during the past three years:

Company/State	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99* (Apr.-Dec.)
ONGC	1.964	2.046	1.557
OIL	2.870	3.094	2.477
Pvt/JV	0.013	0.014	0.032
Total	4.847	5.154	4.066

•Provisional

As against the target of 4.025 MMT during April-December, 1998, the production of crude oil was 4.066 MMT.

(c) and (d) Current level of crude oil production in North East is lower than total refining capacity in Assam after Numaligarh Refinery is operational. In order to supplement crude supply to North East refineries, imported crude supply to BRPL from Halida-Barauni and reverse pumping from Barauni through oil India pipeline has been planned.

Utilisation of Oil Pool Fund

390. DR. B.B DUTTA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the present position of Oil Pool Account;

(b) whether this position is satisfactory,

(c) how Government propose to use this fund; and

(d) whether there is a proposal for utilising this fund for meeting subsidy obligations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (d) With a view to contain the deficit in the Oil Pool Account and to enable the Oil Companies to maintain uninterrupted supplies of petroleum products in the country, the Government announced a comprehensive package on September 1, 1997. To end the oil pool deficit, the Government had decided that part of the liabilities of the Oil Coordination Committee to the Oil Companies shall be cleared through issue of Special Government Bounds by making one time payment to the Oil Companies. Consequently "10.5% Oil Companies (Non-Transferable) Special Government Bonds 2005" totaling to Rs. 12,984 crores were issued by the Government to the oil companies effective 02.043.98. Out of this, an amount of Rs. 6382 crores has been sanctioned for redemption of Bonds. Thereafter, "On Account" payments of Rs. 781 crores have been made till 31.01.99. the balance amount of bonds is about Rs. 5821 croes as on 31.01.99.

Price Hike of LPG

391. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently hiked the price of LPG just only few days before the General Budget;

(b) if so, the reasons and justifications thereof;

(c) whether the common man have been affected due to price hike of LPG;

(d) if so, whether Government propose to review its decision and would bring down the price hike; and

(e) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (e) The Government had decided in November, 1997 that subsidy on LPG will be reduced in phases to reach the level of 15% of the import parity price by 2000-01. The subsidy will be transferred to the fiscal budget from the year 2002 onwards. Ac-cordingly, Government decided to reduce the subsidy by Rs. 24/cylinder. However, to reduce the burden on customers, the Government reviewed the cylinder compensation scheme for the oil companies and Rs. 10/-cylinder was adjusted towards price increase. The ex-storage point price of LPG packed (Domestic) was increased by Rs. 14/cylinder (Rs. 985.92 per MT) only exclusive of duty, sales tax and other local levies effective midnight of 31st January/lst February, 1999.

Cost of Piped Gas

392. SHRI YERRA NARAYANAS-WAMY: Will the Minister of. PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the cost of supplying piped gas for domestic use;

(b) whether GAIL has made any con-clusive studies in this regard;

(c) whether it is a fact that the cost of piped gas should work out cheaper from the existing system of cylinders; and

(d) the details of comparative costs of both the systems?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) The cost for the supply of piped gas varies from region to region depending on availability of natural gas, geographical structures and feasibility of the area.

(b) Yes, Sir. Studies have been con-ducted only in the National Capital Region of Delhi and Mumbai.

(c) This depends upon the geographical features and feasibility report on laying of pipeline network in the town concerned.

(d) No comparative study of the two systems, which are totally different, has been carried out. However, a rebate @ 10% 'has been granted on the price of natural gas supplied under the Delhi city gas distribution pilot project vis-a-vis equivalent quantity of LPG for domestic use.

Filling up ot vacancies in various PSUs

393. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of top vacancies of Chairman / Managing Directors / Director that are still lying vacant in various PSUs/Boards/Committees functioning under the control of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for the last two years, till date;

(b) the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons for not filling up the posts and by when these are likely to be filled up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The details of various vacancies as on date are as under:—

(i) C&MD, Madras Refineries Limited w.e.f. 25.11.98.

(ii) Director (Projects), Gas Authority of India Limited w.e.f. 1.4.96.

(iii) Director (Finance) Bongaigaon Refinery & Petrochemicals Limited w.e.f. 10.7.98.

(iv) Director (Finance), Oil India Li-mited w.e.f. 1.2.98.

(v) Director (E&D), OIL w.e.f. 25.1.99.